Without a woman on his arm, he looked like—

FORTY KINDS OF TROUBLE

50¢

by ALISSA M. and SHAY D.

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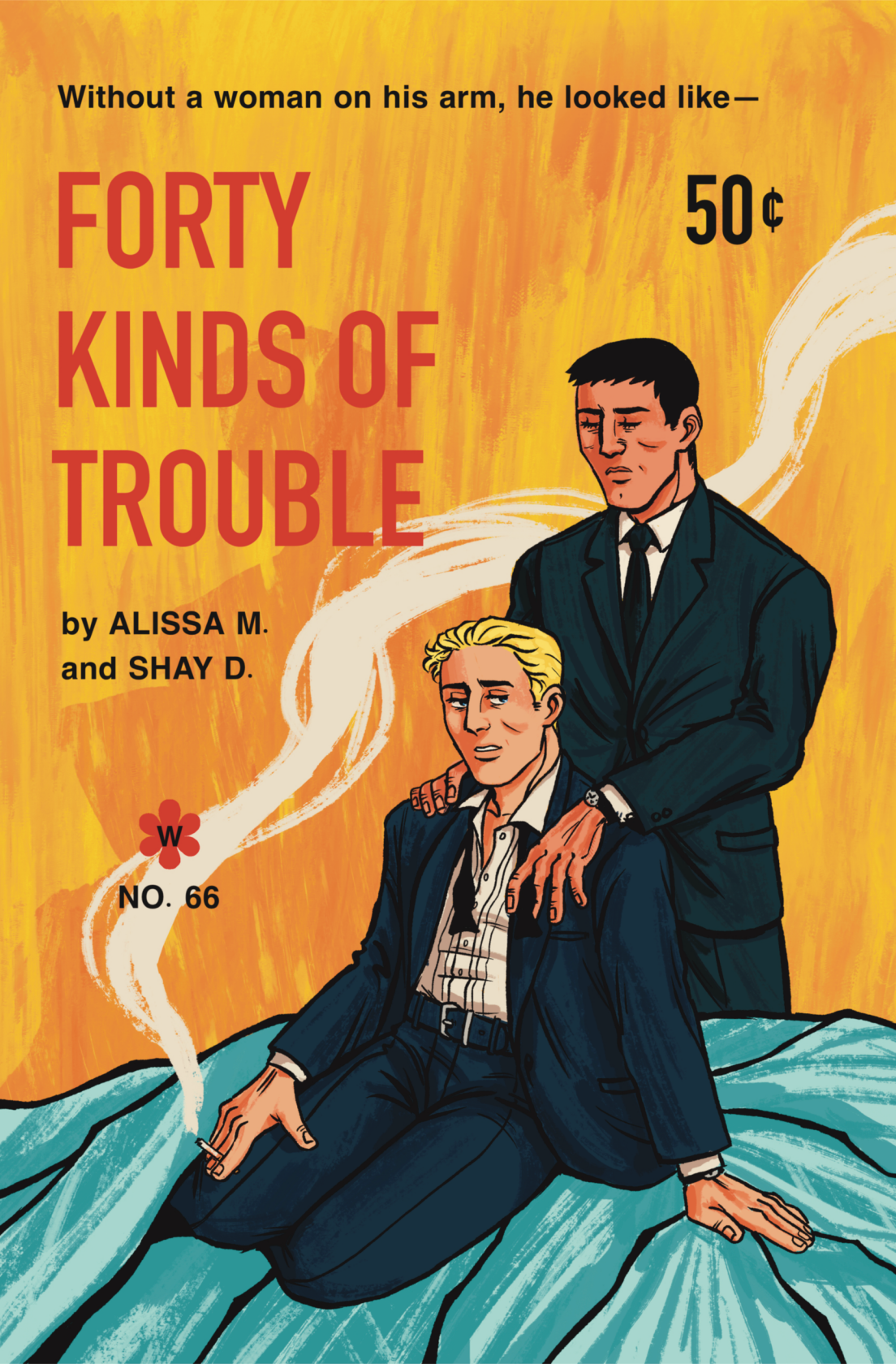
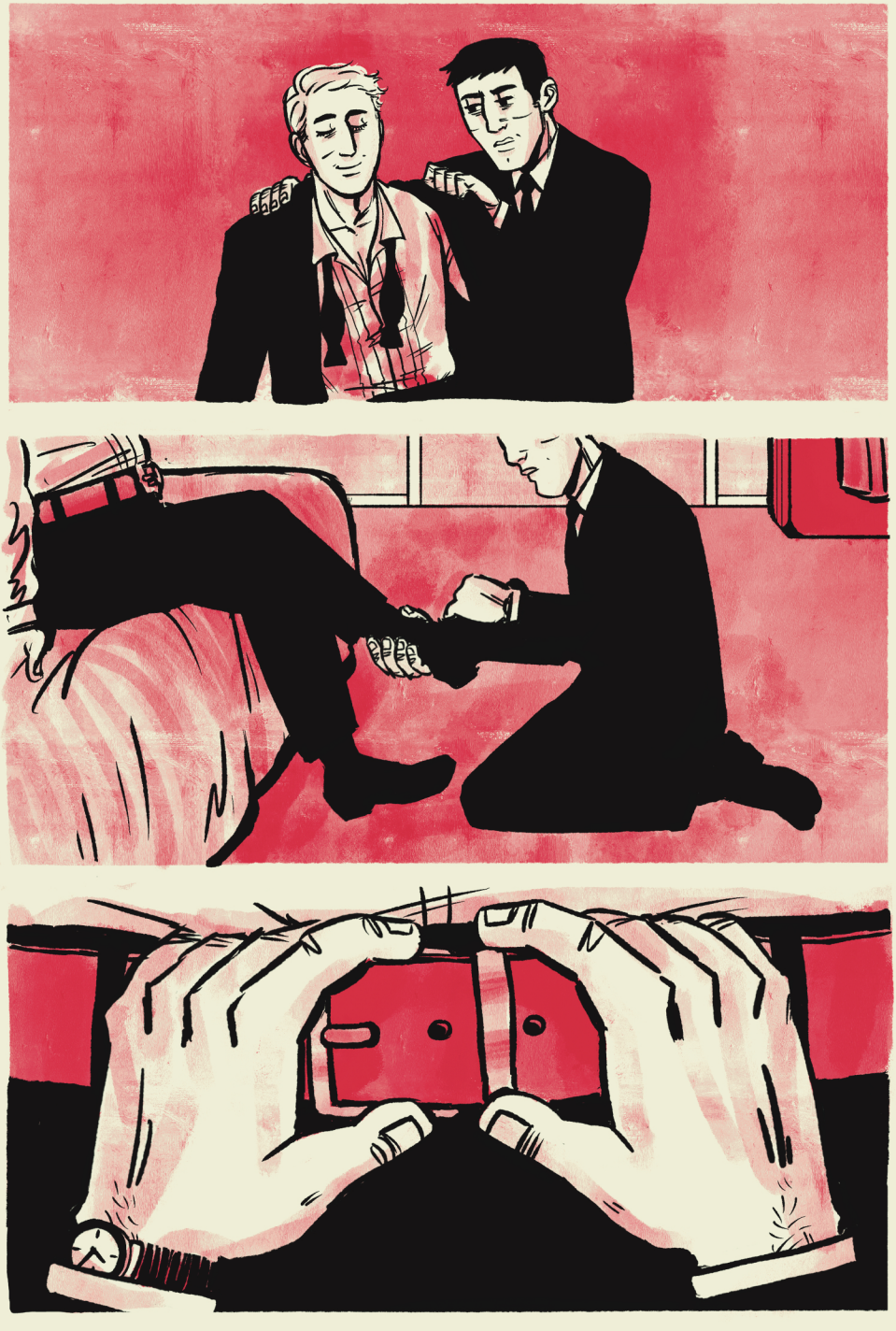
NO. 66



forty kinds of trouble
I'll be seeing you.
I appreciate this.
alissa m. – writer
shay d. – artist

Appreciate what?
You didn't leave me up there.
You carried me along, got me my share.
Parkes didn't understand what there was to appreciate about that.
We were working together.
That's right.
I'll be seeing you.

Parker, wait.
My fingers aren't working right, Parker.
THUMP



You're a dear friend, Parker.
You should lay down.
You should lay down, too.

Parker could feel it like electricity. It was after a job, and he recognized the pattern. The strength of the desire was foreign, though, as though Grofield was touching places no woman ever could.

Is this good?

With the way Grofield was looking at him, Parker knew what he meant.

How about an encore?
They're looking for us together.
Parker?
I'll call you.

Reflections on Pulp

"Without a woman on your arm, you'd look like forty kinds of trouble."
- Alan Grofield, *The Handle* (1966)

The story you have just read draws from a variety of sources close to our hearts. First and foremost comes, of course, Richard Stark's *The Handle* – the final page of which we adapt as the beginning of our tale – but that's not the entirety of Westlake-Stark's contribution to *Forty Kinds of Trouble*. Mr. Westlake's early years writing 'sleaze' greatly influenced his work on Parker and what he'd once referred to as 'euphemism novels' in turn form the foundation of our work here. The fascination of Parker's character, the subtextual tension, the constant presence of outsiders and Parker's status as one all come from the daring and deviant pages of pulp fiction.

For the longest time, that was the world our stories inhabited. Westlake was no stranger to LGBT themes; not in the work published under his own name, not in the heavily-coded dynamic between Parker and Grofield and the multitude of gay characters appearing in the Stark novels, and certainly not when it came to lesbian pulps like *Sally* and *Young and Innocent*. To that extent, our cover is inspired by a 1950s reprint of *The Strange Path* by Gale Wilhelm – another of the increasingly more common lesbian stories appearing at that time – and our tone calls back to that same kind of pulp romance.

Men's magazines, cheap paperbacks, crime and romance and 'genre' fiction that extended beyond the respectable had always been the realm of the outsider, and gay people had always had a hand in it. *Manhunt*, at one point the best-selling crime fiction magazine, took its artistic direction in its premiere issue from gay artist Matt Baker – the progenitor of Good Girl Art – at a time when lesbian author Patricia Highsmith was making a name for herself with the *Ripley* series. By the mid-1960s though, things were beginning to change, and gay stories by gay authors were no longer a matter of subterfuge. In 1966, *The Man from C.A.M.P.* by Victor J. Banis strutted onto the world stage, and it is that same year that gave us *The Handle*.

Although by no means as historically significant as the aforementioned works by LGBT authors, *The Handle* does mark a remarkable shift in Stark's characterisation of Parker and the beginning of a pattern that would lead to the most tender and palpable display of affection in the series. Taking our cues from the historical position of pulp fiction as well as its content, we worked to bring out into the open the subtext inherent to the crime series that had redefined the genre.

"WE WERE WORKING TOGETHER."

They were partners-in-crime and that was all they'd ever been but laying wounded in a hotel room in Mexico, part-time actor part-time thief Grofield finds out he needs cold-blooded pro Parker more than he'd ever imagined.

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